

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A shift lever apparatus comprising:

a base member;

a shift lever; and

at least one planar four-bar linkage mechanism supporting said shift lever so as to be movable relative to said base member, said planar four-bar linkage mechanism being defined by a parallelogram-quadrangle including four connecting portions which are positioned at respective four corners of said a parallelogram, and said four connecting portions being positioned in an operational plane which is rotatable in a direction perpendicular to said operational plane,

wherein said planar four-bar linkage mechanism includes four link elements including a base-side link element, a lever-side link element opposing said base-side link element, and a pair of connecting link elements connecting said base-side link element and said lever-side link element, said shift lever being supported by said lever-side link element, and said base member supporting said base-side link element

wherein said base-side link and said lever-side link are straight link elements, said base-side link and said lever-side link being parallel to each other, and at least one of said pair of connecting link elements is a curved link element which is curved so as not to interfere with a member other than said pair of connecting link elements located in the base member, said pair of connecting link elements being non-parallel to each other.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said lever-side link element is parallel to or substantially parallelly shiftable in said operational plane relative to said base member.
4. (Currently Amended) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said four connecting portions connect said lever-side link element, said base-side link element and said pair of connecting link elements to each other, said four connecting portions each having a rotational axis, all of said rotational axes of said four connecting portions being parallel to each other.
5. (Currently Amended) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said base-side link element and said lever-side link element are parallel to each other, and said pair of connecting link elements are parallel to each other.
6. (Canceled)
7. (Previously Presented) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said base-side link element is arranged along a rotational axis, and said operational plane of said planar four-bar linkage mechanism is rotatable about said rotational axis of said base-side link element in a plane perpendicular to said operational plane.
8. (Currently Amended) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said four link elements conduct a link motion in said operational plane, and said base-side link element is arranged along a rotational axis, said operational plane of said planar four-bar linkage mechanism being rotatable about said rotational axis of said base-side link element in a plane perpendicular to said operational plane, so that said shift lever is able to shift its position parallelly without changing its inclination relative to said base member in said operational plane of said four-bar linkage mechanism, and said shift lever is able to rotate about said rotational axis of said base-side link element in a plane perpendicular to said operational plane of said four-bar linkage mechanism.
9. (Original) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 3, wherein said base member includes a gate member including a shift lever path through which said shift lever extends, said shift lever path including two path portions extending parallel to each other, said gate member

including an intermediate wall located between said two path portions, said intermediate wall having opposite side surfaces parallel to each other.

10. (Currently Amended) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 21, wherein at least one of said pair of connecting links is curved.

11. (Original) A shift lever apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said base member has a surface having a plurality of concave portions spaced from each other, and a cylinder portion is provided to a link element of said four-bar linkage mechanism, a pin being slidably inserted in said cylinder portion, said pin being biased by a spring against said surface of said base member.

12. (Canceled).